

S E C R E T                      BANGKOK 02619  
CXBKKSVR:  
ACTION: POL  
INFO: DATTLO AMB CHRON DAO DCM SA RSO

DISSEMINATION: POL1  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:EJOHN  
DRAFTED: POL:GKENT  
CLEARED: DCM:JFENTWISTLE

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4197  
INFO RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 5569  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002619

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/03/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TH](#)  
SUBJECT: THAILAND: SENIOR STATESMEN SEEKING THE KING'S  
APPROVAL TO PUSH ASIDE PM SAMAK

REF: BANGKOK 2610

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason 1.4 (b,d)

11. (S) Summary: Ambassador saw Privy Councilor ACM Siddhi Savetsila September 3 to discuss the current political impasse and Siddhi's views on the way forward. Siddhi laid out a scenario which he said he would present to King Bhumiphol in an audience at the Hua Hin Palace later in the evening September 3. In short: PM Samak had to go. The best replacement would be former PM Anand Panyarachun, bolstered by "honest" figures to "rehabilitate democracy." The House and Senate would stay in place; the Constitution would also remain but needed to be amended to allow non-elected MP figures to serve in the Cabinet. Ambassador repeatedly stressed that any action in Thailand needed to stay within the constitutional framework, and that the U.S. would react negatively to developments which amounted to an extra-constitutional coup. Anand subsequently confirmed to Ambassador that he had been involved in related discussions for the past week, but he refused to be involved "before the fact," and would only discuss terms of any possible role afterwards, focused on the least impact on the contents of Thai democracy.

12. (S) Comment: Confirmation that a trusted Privy Councilor and long-time friend of the U.S. is on his way to seek King Bhumiphol's approval for the above scheme is disturbing news. Siddhi suggested that matters might come to a head in the next 48 hours (In a separate Sept. 3 conversation with Ambassador, Defense Ministry PermSec Winai said there could be some "good signs" this evening). That said, Siddhi freely acknowledged three crucial pieces to the plan are not yet in place, and might not fall into place: first and foremost, the King's assent; second, Anand has not yet agreed to participate; third, Army Commander Anuphong, probably the only person who could deliver the necessary message to Samak, had so far refused to tell Samak it was time to go. We will continue to press our message of staying within the constitutional framework to all parties involved. Anand took Ambassador's message on board, but made clear he did not agree with the U.S. perspective. End Summary and Comment.

Samak has to go

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13. (S) Privy Councilor ACM Siddhi Savetsila made clear to Ambassador Sept. 3 that he viewed Thaksin and, by extension, PM Samak as an existential threat to the Thailand he supported, centered on the monarchy. Samak had lost his legitimacy, beset by multiple court cases and the violence in the streets of Udon Thani and Bangkok against civilians. The only way out of the current political impasse was for Samak to resign or the House to dissolve. But Samak refused to leave; he had lied to coalition partners about his August 30 audience with the King, had dismissed Opposition Leader Abhisit's suggestion during the August 31 parliamentary debate to call new elections which pro-Thaksin forces would win again, and had even rejected his own wife's and daughter's prostrate entreaties to resign for the good of the country. Samak therefore had to go.

14. (S) Stressing that Ambassador was the only foreigner he would share the information with, Siddhi laid out a scenario which he said he would present to King Bhumiphol later in the day in an audience for the Privy Councilors in Hua Hin. The solution was not by using force but to rehabilitate Thai democracy. The same Constitution would remain, amended to allow outsiders (non-MPs) to serve in the Cabinet. The House and Senate would stay. Universally respected former PM Anand should serve as the leader of the "project," which would involve respected, "honest" ex-military and Ministry of Interior officials, academics, one or two PAD members, and perhaps some Democrat Party figures. The mandate would be to initiate a wide array of reforms in the economic, social, and political sphere. That in turn would "weed out" the bane effects of Thaksinism from the system. Army Commander Anuphong would have to deliver the message to Samak; no one else could.

Who is behind the effort and why?  
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15. (S) Siddhi said that a group of prominent figures had approached him with the plan, more than could fit in his modest living room. The only one he named was Pramote Nakornrab, a retired respected professor and political scientist from Chulalongkorn University; others included a high ranking Air Force officer and a Constitutional Court Judge. Since, as a Privy Councilor, he was not supposed to be involved in politics, only in advising the King, Siddhi agreed to meet "as a former military leader" ready to do his best for the country. He was willing to push forward and present the project to the King in part to shield Privy Council Chair Prem Tinsulanonda, who had been heavily and unjustly criticized for backing the PAD and trying to promote a Democrat Party-led government. The stakes were high; it was essential to rehabilitate the democratic system in Thailand. "If we lose, Thaksin will come back, and if Thaksin comes back, the monarchy will be lost," Siddhi explained.

16. (S) Siddhi acknowledged that neither Anand nor Anuphong were on board yet. Anand said he would need to review a proposal in detail before accepting. Even though Anuphong thought Samak must go, Siddhi said Anuphong was reluctant to push in part because he disliked the PAD, especially leaders Sondhi and Chamlong. Siddhi said he had challenged Anuphong - was he prepared to lose his principles in support of the monarchy because he did not like 3-4 people? Most importantly, it was up to the King to indicate what he thought of the plan. Siddhi would brief; the King would stay aloof, but provide his reaction. "What will happen will happen."

17. (S) Ambassador repeatedly emphasized U.S. concerns with non-elected systems of governance; the U.S. could not condone any extra-constitutional change in government in Thailand, since it would amount to a coup by another name. Ambassador urged Siddhi to explore alternatives within the constitutional framework: caretaker government prior to snap elections; reconfigured coalition with a different PM; or a national unity cabinet involving the Democrats. Leaders in a

democracy needed to be elected.

¶8. (S) Siddhi demurred, and said that Samak simply would not listen to anyone. Ambassador stressed that PAD leader Sondhi was just as stubborn as Samak, but that it was imperative to push for a dialogue to begin to seek a political resolution to the political crisis.

Anand more forthcoming the second time  
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¶9. (S) Ambassador engaged Anand after the Siddhi meeting for the second time in 24 hours. More forthcoming this time than on September 2 (reftel), Anand acknowledged he had been listening to the group for the past week, but refused to get involved directly in anything before the plan was put into action. If the plan went forward, he was prepared to meet with them at that point. It was imperative to ensure the least impact on the contents of Thai democracy; even in the case of non-elected persons of supposed quality, care needed to be taken. Anand claimed that "I'm always my own man," and that he had turned down many positions offered when he thought others sought to control him.

¶10. (S) Ambassador underscored the critical importance of developments in Thailand staying within the framework of the constitution and rule of law; if that did not occur, the U.S. would respond accordingly. Anand replied that he had disagreed with the U.S. reaction to the 2006 coup and frequently disagreed with western views of what constituted democracy in various countries.  
JOHN